CHAPTER 4
RE-INTERPRETING THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but also what lies within our heads.

D.W. Meining

Life in Australia continues to be "influenced more by landscape than it is by culture." It has played a vital role in the Australian context. Since its discovery, Australian landscape has deeply influenced the European interpretation of landscape. Their interpretation of landscape as discussed in earlier chapters was very different from that of the Aboriginal people inhabiting the continent. When the Europeans landed in Australia in 1788, they encountered two very different landscapes.

The 'real' landscape, composed of rock, soil, vegetation, water, etc., has an objective past and present existence. The second is the 'perceived' landscape, which consisted of the 'sensed and remembered accounts as well as hypotheses about the real landscape'. However, when the Europeans witnessed the real landscape, its physical and social structure came as a cultural shock. It was different from the 'idyllic Arcadian and the Utopian image' that they had in their minds, all along.

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As mentioned in Chapter Two, the impression of the landscape may be close to reality or it may contain some misconceptions. According to Tuan:

Landscape...is not to be defined by itemizing its parts. The parts are subsidiary clues to an integrated image. Landscape is such an image, a construct of the mind and of feeling.\(^2\)

According to Meining, landscape is a composition of our mind rather than our eyes. Thereby response to a particular landscape will be based on the environment as people 'perceive' it to be and not as it really is. Its interpretation is guided by the individual culture, which has its impact upon the 'real' landscape. Different Europeans viewed the landscape differently. This brings out multiple interpretations of the landscape that influenced and inspired all of them.

To Sir Joseph Banks, Australian landscape appeared to be fertile and "every hill seemed to be clothed with trees of no mean size."\(^3\) To Banks, who was a botanist, Botany Bay, was a "prodigal wealth of plants."\(^4\) For the convicts it was 'hell'; for the working class it was 'paradise' and for the settlers it was their 'lucky' country. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was the most popular colonial tourist destination. As pointed out by Haskell, "By and large the whole of Australia's artistic tradition—for example, in painting...in novels...in music... is dominated by the concern with


\(^4\) Ibid.
the land." \(^5\) Landscape is therefore deeply rooted in the Australian consciousness. It is ubiquitous.

The changes and interpretations of the landscape that have occurred in the last 200 years have clearly influenced the process of adapting, accepting and interpreting the landscape, however, was not a smooth one. As Constable stated, "We see nothing until we truly understand it." \(^6\) The question that comes to mind is who and why were they in Australia? Was their response to the object guided by their past or their present situation?

The present chapter will analyse how Australian landscape was changed by different Europeans - the convicts, gaolers, colonist, settlers, gold diggers, bourgeoisie, bushmen, nationalists, improvers, etc. As reflected in their poetry, social, political, economical and cultural factors had a deep impact in their interpretation and 'accepting' the landscape. It will also analyse how attitudinal changes, in the last 200 years have enabled the Europeans to link, de-link and re-link with the changing landscape.

ADOPTING THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

The search for a new penal colony by the British Government led to the discovery of Australia. With the independence of America, the British Government could no longer siphon off prisoners to the lost colony. As such it was looking for new colonies where they could

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\(^5\) Ibid.

'clear the overcrowded and in sanitary prison hulks' of Britain. It wanted:

...to establish a Colony of convicted felons in any distant Part of the Globe, from whence their Escape might be difficult and where, from the Fertility of the Soil, they might be enabled to maintain themselves, after the First Year, with little of no Aid from the Mother Country.

In 1779, Botany Bay, known to the British as New South Wales, was recommended by Joseph Banks as fit for a convict colony. Having stayed in Botany Bay for two months, in 1770, Banks found the bay suitable for the cause. For it:

... was about seven months voyage from England... the climate, he apprehended was, similar to that about Toulouse... the portion of rich soil was small in comparison to the barren, but sufficient to support a very large number of people...there was no tame animals...but oxen and sheep... would thrive ...the grass was long and luxuriant, and there were some vegetables...the country was well supplied with water; there was abundance of timber and fuel... There escape will be difficult as the country was far distant from any part of the globe inhabited by Europeans.

Besides having favourable conditions to be a penal colony, its geographical location also suited the British government to open a 'post for trade with China and a base for collecting strategic materials for the Royal Navy'. In 1788, the first batch of convicts landed in Australia. Unlike Cook or Banks they found the landscape

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7 Ibid., p.61
8 Ibid., pp.61-62
to be like ‘hell'. They were confronted with “a landscape, fauna and flora, as well as an indigenous population, quite unlike any they had previously experienced.”9 The Australian landscape was alien in many ways. They were unable to attach themselves to the landscape, which was yet to be explored. They found the landscape unpleasant and described it as an empty land:

The Gum has no shade,  
And the Wattle no fruit;  
The parrots don’t warble  
In trolls like the flute;  
The Cockatoo cooeth  
Not much like the dove...  
The plains are dusty,  
The creeks are all dried ...

(Robert Lowe "From Songs of the Squatters"10)

The landscape remained misunderstood and misinterpreted among the ‘new comers’. The ‘Spirit Country’, appeared to them as a land full of ‘strangeness’. The trees appeared to be ‘gaunt and aloof’. Although the animals appeared mild, harmless and of astounding agility, they were not fit for domestication; undergrowth was ‘prickly and dry’. As:

...Nature is prosaic,  
Unpicturesque, unmusical, and where  
Nature-reflecting Art is not yet born;--  
A land without antiquities, with one,

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And only one, poor spot of classic ground,
(That on which Cook first landed)—where, instead
Of heart-communings with ancestral relics,
Which purge the pride while they exalt the mind,
We've nothing left us but anticipation....

[Barron Field "On Reading The Controversy Between Lord
Byron And Mr. Bowles"]

For a long time landscape remained misunderstood and was
regarded with aversion. As W. Tench stated, "This place stands
unequalled from the situation, extent and nature of the country....
To men desperate of fortune and of the lowest classes of the
people, unless they can procure a passage as indent servants...this
part of the world offers no temptation...." The convicts along with
the gaolers had to adjust to the 'new world' along with 'new
creations'. As Macintyre states, "Everything was topsy-turvy, and
even the attempts to faithfully reproduce familiar institutions
brought hybrid results." As reflected in:

...would seem an after-birth,
Not conceive'd in the beginning
(For God bless'd His work at first,
And saw that it was good),
But emerge'd at the first sinning,
When the ground was therefore curst;

[Barron Field "Kangaroo"]

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12 Manning Clark, Select Documents In Australian History, 1788-1850, vol.11,
(Australia: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1980), p.50
13 Ibid., p.51
Established as a penal colony by the British in 1788, it "began as an experiment in human engineering. Botany Bay was not just a dumping ground for unwanted criminals, but experimentation in reformation in using the rejects of one society to create another."\textsuperscript{15} As J. A. Froude stated, "He would like to sweep the human refuse out of English gutters and send them to Australia for a better life...."\textsuperscript{16} The fact that life in Australia was not easy was overlooked totally. To the Europeans, Australia was seen as "a source of replenishment for the impoverished aristocrat—not as a place to stay, but from which to restock the family purse and return to England with enough to resume one's rightful place in society."\textsuperscript{17}

Australia had an exotic appeal among the intellectuals, who 'used' Australia as a laboratory for their intellectual pursuits and imperial ambitions. Therefore, the convicts were left to fend for themselves and become a 'self-sufficient community of peasant proprietors'. As Surgeon Mate said, "It is now so long since we have heard from home that our clothes are worn threadbare. We begin to think the mother country has entirely forsaken us. As for shoes, my stock has been exhausted these six months, and I have been obliged since that time to beg and borrow among the gentlemen...."\textsuperscript{18} Besides depression and scarcity of clothes, the convicts struggle with the landscape continued. Famine and shortage of food made their life 'hell'. More than once, while waiting for supply ships, the colony almost starved. Although

\textsuperscript{15} David Malouf, \textit{The Spirit of the Play} (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), p.12
\textsuperscript{16} Kaye Harman, \textit{Australia Brought to Book} (New South Wales: Boobook Publications, 1985), p.11
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., pp.50-51
Captain Arthur Philip initiated wheat farming in 1788 in Port Jackson, the first farms failed. In spite, of all the schemes that were introduced to create Australian farming in the image of England, it failed to be self-sufficient. The Australian farmers, who were convicts and first time farmers, who lacked even the modicum of farming skills, were expected to be as skilful as the farmers in England.

As Philip stated, "The greatest inconvenience ...is from the rocks and the labour of clearing away the woods which surround us, and which are mostly gum-trees of a very large size...."19 The soil was not suitable for agriculture, pest intolerable, the rains were unreliable and seasons were unpredictable. The tools that the colonisers brought for farming were not only unsuitable, but also of low quality. The landscape had:

\[ \text{Huge rocks and stunted trees meet you where e'er} \\
\text{With foul wind and crank ship 'twere hard to wear...} \]

\[ \text{With groves on either hand of ancient trees} \\
\text{Planted by Nature in the days of yore...} \]

Besides the topography, the convicts found the landscape's 'solitude' even more intimidating. Along with the penal punishment and a lonely, desolate life, they felt stifled in the new land. The trees and the plants reminded them of 'days of yore', where no tender sentiment could be nourished.

\[ \text{But all is still as death! Nor voice of man} \\
\text{Is heard, nor forest warbler's tuneful song.} \]

\[ ^{19} \text{Ibid., p.57} \]
It seems as if the beauteous world began
To be but yesterday, and the earth still young
And unpossessed...

Yet all is still as death! Wild solitude
Reigns undisturbed along that voiceless shore,
And every tree seems standing as it stood
Six thousand years ago. The loud wave's roar

Were music in these wilds. The wise and good
That wont of old, as hermits, to adore
The God of Nature in the desert drear,
Might sure have found a fit sojourning here.

(John D. Lang "D'Entrecasteaux' Channel, Van Dieman's Land"20)

Australian landscape appeared dry and desolate, where
Nature had not penetrated. The stillness and 'unpossessed' of the
landscape reminded the convicts and the gaolers of 'death'. The
'voiceless shore' and the trees look the same as they were 'six
thousand years ago'. The harsh alien environment along with
severe shortage of food, neglect by the government, and "theft
from the stores reduced Australia's first European settlement to near
starvation in the midst of what seemed natural abundance to the
original inhabitants,"21 contributed to their sufferings.

They failed to associate with the landscape and the
landscape remained mysterious and appeared a coded puzzle to
the 'new' Australians. For the convicts it was another 'hell'. Longing

University Press, 2001), p.388

21 William J. Lines, Taming the Great South Land (New South Wales: Allen & Unwin,
1991), p.28
for their country and family, influenced their decision about 'accepting' the landscape. This is amply reflected in Lang's "D'Entrecasteaux' Channel, Van Diemen's Land."\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{verbatim}
It's often when I slumber I have a pleasant dream,
With my sweet girl a setting down by a purling stream,
Thro' England I've roaming with her at command,
Now I awaken broken-hearted on Van Diemen's Land...
\end{verbatim}

The fear and uncertainty of life and failure to return to their country, gripped the psyche of the early convicts and colonisers.

\begin{verbatim}
God bless our wives and families likewise that happy shore,
That isle of great contentment, which we shall see no more....\textsuperscript{23}
\end{verbatim}

The convicts were not used to any form of work. As Phillip stated:

\begin{verbatim}
The great difference between settlements formed as this is and one formed by farmers and emigrants who have been used to labour, and who reap the fruits of their own industry...has taught me how difficult it is to make men industrious who have passed their lives in habits of vice and indolence. In some cases, it has been found impossible; neither kindness nor severity have had any effect; and tho' I can say that the convicts in general behave well, there are many who dread punishment less than they fear labour; and
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{22} John Leonard, n.20, p.394

\textsuperscript{23} William J.Lines, n.21 p.395
those who have not been brought up to hard work, which are by far the greatest part, bear it badly."24

They refused to 'labour willingly for their masters'. Their views were guided by their past experiences, ideas from the 'home' and present circumstances. The convicts as well as the non-convicts objected to the idea of subordination, and refused to accept their 'role as servants to colonial lords'. If given a choice they would not have left their county and their beloved ones. Therefore, they did not try to understand the landscape nor tried to venture into it. To them migration to the colony was more of a necessity rather than choice.

With shortage of food and other essentials, they exclaimed in anger and questioned, "Is this your heaven upon earth? Is this delicious climate? Is this your Australian paradise?"25 As the following lines further state:

The woods have never rang with War's loud crash,
No chivalry has swept the silent plains;
Mailed bands of combatants, with courage rash
Were never led to fight by gallant Thanes.

There was a constant longing and comparison with England. Australian landscape lacked 'war loud crash' and 'chivalry'. The landscape was yet to witness 'fights'. The landscape compelled them to question them as to why they left their country.

24 Manning Clarke, n.12, p.50
25 Kaye Harman, n.16, p.28
Here are no storied tombs, nor sculptured shrines,  
On which we read a Saint's or Hero's praise,  
The ancient Harper never poured his rhymes,  
Nor Troubadour e'er sang melodious lays

It lacked the 'history' and 'picturesqueness' that the English or American landscape had. As William Howitt stated, "A distorted picture will always produce distorted impressions and they who have hitherto painted this colony in entire coeur de rose, have grossly mistaken its real interest."26 Australian landscape has not only shaped and affected the Australians, but has transfixed the imagination and vision of Australia in the English psyche.

After initial failure, farming and pastoral industry developed at a rapid pace. By 1792, the colony was self-sufficient in agriculture, followed by pastoral industry's success in 1794. It was the beginning of re-shaping of its land into another Europe. As Alexander Berry stated, "This country is so peculiar, and has so many apparent disadvantages in the midst of some seeming advantages, it becomes our duty to improve the latter and to obviate the former. It's therefore, perhaps happy that its colonisation has been deferred until the present time...." Both the farmers and the squatters with the application of 'correct theory' tried to overcome those aspects of Australian landscape, which defied European logic.

However, it overlooked the limitations imposed by the Australian climate, soil and landscape. Government-sponsored exploration throughout the 1800s opened up new tracts of land for

26 Manning Clarke, n.12, p.28
farming and pastoral use. Farmers and squatters gradually moved inland and occupied huge areas for pastures. As a result, a large area of forests and scrub were cleared, which led to drastic change in the landscape. As the clearing was done indiscriminately, a large number of ‘sacred’ plants and sites were also uprooted. All this led to the moulding of a distinct way of life in Australia.

As the settlement spread, ‘conceptual order on the wild and unruly Australian landscape’ was turned onto a ‘commodity appropriate for capitalist production’. With the success in agriculture, pastoral and wool industry, it “favoured a utilitarian cast of mind, and explorers throughout the period of Australia’s early history, noted only those geographical features likely to yield a profit.”27 Mitchell28 introduced the necessary changes in the landscape that were required by ‘civilised inhabitants’ existence. He gave “form, differentiation and denomination to the previously anonymous landscape. He brought space into the realm of civilised discourse; his maps opened the land to invasion, enabled the history of conquest to begin, and transformed the amorphous face of Australia into an imperial possession.”29

With expansion in pastoral industry and agriculture farming, economic and social benefits were reaped. It changed the ‘waste lands’ into profitable land. What was once interpreted as a commercial desert, turned into an economic paradise. However,

27 William J. Lines, n.21, p.49
28 Thomas Livingston Mitchell in 1831 produced the first map of the colony and laid out the colony’s principal roads.
29 William J. Lines, n.21, pp.52-53
with gradual economic benefits, the nostalgic 'England-with-all-thy-faults-I-love-thee-still' remained in the minds of most Australians. This still blinded their vision with regard to Australian landscape.

...The silence and the sunshine creep
With soft caress
O'er billowy plain and mountain steep
And wilderness—

The grey gums by the lonely creek,...
The wind-swept plain, the dim blue peak,
The cold white light,
The solitude spread near and far...

Whence doth the mournful keynote start?
These purple hills, these yellow leas,
These forests lone,
These mangrove shores, these shimmering seas,
This summer zone.

Shall they inspire no nobler strain
Than songs of bitterness and pain?

(George E. Evans "An Australian Symphony"30)

The landscape lacked "all the dearest allegories of human life." It appeared implausible, as it did not resemble anything that the European experienced previously. The Europeans concept of beauty was confined to the economic profit that a particular landscape will yield. For example, explorer happiness lies in his discovering a pass through the mountains where "not only my horses, but the cattle and sheep of the farmer, might pass without danger, to those extensive pastures situated on the northern

30 George Mackaness, An Anthology of Australian Verse (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1952), pp.82-84
This led to a change in the mentalities among the different Europeans.

The free settlers and non-convicts intention was to make a quick fortune before returning to their native country and lead a comfortable life. The main focus was to earn money and acquire wealth. Their pursuit was guided by materialism as such their attitude towards the landscape remained detached and formal. Their interpretation of the landscape reflected an alien and hostile tone. They remained detached and indifferent towards the landscape. The only relationship they had was based on economic grounds.

They failed to appreciate the beauty in the Australian landscape. It was still interpreted as barren and desolate. To the Europeans, beauty was still measured by economic benefits. For example, when the new Australian discovered rivers flowed inland, dissipating their waters in remote swamps, proved frustrating to settlers accustomed to European drainage patterns. Only proper rivers that were linear fulfilled the desired commerce requirements. As the river system was different, they did not suit the Europeans economic requirements.

According to the colonisers, "Australia was a country whose external sources of creation were few and uninviting." They were looking for "more intelligible appeals to their feelings and intellect, and...yearn for ...more audible voices and tangible substantiality,

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31 William L. Lines, n.21, p.50
32 Ibid., p.70
under the influence of which they have learnt rather the value of social communion, than to appreciate the beauties of nature."

The exploration of the Blue Mountains in 1813, paved way for expedition into the interiors of Australia. It opened the interiors to European settlers. The social impact of this exploration led to the change in attitude among the Europeans, with regards to the landscape as "a land to which we have no instinctive love, a country of adoption only" to a "land not only of their adoption, the land which by association, by the ties of family and connexion, had thoroughly become their own."35

As Gascoigne states "European settlement in Australia came to seem less and less a temporary expedient and more a large-scale and long term venture based on the colonist' capabilities of 'improving' the Australian landscape in ways that would support and enrich a larger and larger European population."36 Besides the convicts and the gaolers, squatters, settlers, gold diggers, bourgeois and Bushmen added changes to the landscape.

Gradual transformation in the interpretation of the landscape, from 'antipodeans nature became more agreeable and intelligible'. As Lines states, "Once those features associated with European activity appeared on the Australian landscape, the country became imaginatively possessed."37 Few could capture

33 Ibid., pp.70-71
35 Ibid., p.30
37 William J. Lines, n.21, p.49

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the native beauty and describe the landscape with all its strangeness. The landscape with its "unstoried, artless, unenhanced"\textsuperscript{38} landscape appeared friendly, to the Europeans for the first time.

\begin{quote}
'Tis the early Summer season
When the skies are clear and blue-
When wide warm fields are glad with corn
As green as ever grew
And upland growths of wattles
Engolden all the views...
\end{quote}

It describes the landscape, giving it 'an Edenic appeal'. It is very different from what Field, Lang or Lowe stated about the landscape. The colour in the landscape "blue" and "green" reflects the change in the attitude of the Europeans. As stated by Bechervaise, "Colours formed a new, unimagined combination, unlike those of any other landscape. Greys, fawns and olive-greens predominated, providing a subtle foil for many-coloured..."\textsuperscript{39} Europeans were able to associate with images of the sky being clear and the fields being warm and green.

\begin{quote}
When the woods are whitened over
By the jolly cockatoo,
Or swarm with birds as beautiful
As ever gladdened through
The shining hours of Time when
The golden year was new.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{39} John Mayston Bechervaise, \textit{Australia: World of Difference} (Adelaide: Rigby, 1967), p.11
(Charles Harper “Early Summer”\textsuperscript{40})

There is a yearning to find familiarity in a landscape, yet to be explored. This paved the way to recognise the unidentified in terms of the identifiable. The “jolly cockatoo” and “swarm” of birds, brighten the landscape that was interpreted as intimidating and mysterious. The ‘new’ interpretation of the landscape reflected the change in attitude among the Europeans, with regards to the landscape.

\textit{Let us go forth: for beautiful is the night!}
\textit{Most beautiful! The wide fields deep in the maize,}
\textit{And orchard-bosomed homes, and, zooming all,}
\textit{The old and solemn woods}
\textit{Float is a sliver sea}
\textit{Poured from the fountains of the rising Moon,}
\textit{Who, half behind yon hill-top, seemeth there ...}

(Charles Harper "A Summer Night Scene"\textsuperscript{41})

They interpret and also associate themselves with the beauty—bush, flora, and fauna—of the landscape, with its new addition. The landscape’s mesmerising beauty reflected the core beauty of the night that “floats in the sliver sea.” It captures the brightness of the moon, which radiates the deep, wide maize fields and the woods. Through this new interpretation of the landscape, they were able to bring out the peculiar features that are “ambivalent secularity and its concentration on the impediments in

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.28
the way of attaining Paradise rather than on the seat of bliss itself."42

The change in attitude from a negative one to a positive one was due to various reasons, the most prominent being social and economic progress. As Marjoribanks explains, Europeans settlers were divided into classes. "Those who intend to settle permanently in their adopted country and those who intend to return after having amassed a competency."43 As stated earlier, with the development of agriculture and pastoral industry, the desire to imitate the prosperous class of England engulfed the new 'hairistocracy'44 of Australia. As Howitt states:

These men, in England had score of wealthier and more educated classes about them; but here they are relieved from high pressure of such a state of society. They are a majority here. They get more money than at home, possess and ride on horses, carry guns and keep dogs. They enjoyed liberty, which they did not experience in England.45

As such they re-fashioned Australian landscape into a 'botanical' image of Europe. As mentioned in chapter 1, landscape in England had a political connotation. It symbolised the power and status of the individual. Similarly, in Australia, the neo-rich, wanted to re-create England in Australia. The longing for home and the desire to visit the 'old country', led to the construction of

42 Harry Heseltine, n.38, p.31
43 Ibid., p.31
44 Kaye Harman n.16, p.30
45 Ibid., p.30
the classic stately homes of the English aristocracy, complete with 'green English gardens'. As Howitt observed:

The English stamp and English character are on all their settlements. They are English houses, English enclosures that you see: English farms, English gardens, English cattle's and horses, English fowls about the yard, English flowers and plants carefully cultivated. You see great bushes of furze, even by the rudest settlers' cottages. There are hedges of sweet briar about their gardens, bushes of holly... There are hawthorns and young oaks in the shrubberies. England reproduces herself in the new land."46

Thus one finds that English character is being super imposed in the 'barren' Australian landscape. They moulded the new land and its people based on western values and philosophy. They believed in the concept that placed people 'above' Nature. They were considered superior possessing the right and even the responsibility to control, subjugate and bend in accordance with their needs. It emphasised on the need to 'conquer' and 'tame' nature. As Marcus Clarke stated:

In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribbling of Nature learning how to write. Some see no beauty in our trees without shade, our flowers without perfume, our birds who cannot fly and our beasts who have not yet learned to walk on all fours. But the dwellers of the wilderness acknowledge the subtle charm of this fantastic

land of monsters. He becomes familiar with the beauty of loneliness. Whispered to by the myriad tongues of the wilderness, he learns the language of the barren and the uncouth, and can read the hieroglyphics of haggard gum-trees, blown into odd shapes, distorted with fierce hot winds, or cramped with cold nights, when the Southern Cross freezes in a cloudless sky of icy blue. The phantasmagoria of that wild dreamland termed the Bush interprets itself.  

However, the old alien, forbidding and unwelcoming interpretation of the landscape prevailed along with its new and positive interpretation.

They are rhymes rudely strung with intent less
Of sound than of words,
In lands where bright blossoms are scentless,
And songless bright birds;
Where, with fire and fierce drought on her tresses,
Insatiable summer oppresses
Sere woodlands and sad wildernesses
And faint flocks and herds

Where in dreariest days, when all dews end,
And all winds are warm,
Wild winters large floodgates are loosened,
And floods, freed by storm...

...When the gnarled, knotted trunks Eucalyptian
Seem carved like weird columns Egyptian,
With curious devise, quaint inscription,
And hieroglyph strange;

(Adam Lindsay Gordon "A Dedication")

47 Manning Clark n.12, p.16

It eloquently interprets the landscape with "bright blossoms," which are "scentless" and birds, which are "bright" but "songless." Its "insatiable" summer and drought and its "sad wilderness," bring a certain sense of uneasiness. The strangeness of the landscape further gets highlighted by "Wild Winter's large flood-gates are loosened" and where songs are yet to attain a 'form'. The interpretation of both the positive and negative image of landscape brings to light the gradual change in viewing the landscape from economic point of view only. As Kendall reflects:

...I take thee for my Teacher, in thy voice
Of deathless majesty, I kneeling hear
God's grand authentic Gospel! Year by year,
The great sublime cantata of thy storm
Strikes through my spirit-fills it with a life
Of startling beauty! Thou my Bible art,
With holy leaves of rock, flower, and tree....
The broader foundations of a finer hope
Were gathered in; and thou hast lifted up
The blind horizon for a larger faith!

(Henry Kendall "To a Mountain")

As stated before, the fear of the unidentified, combined with a 'Victorian occultism', reverberate throughout Australian literature in the nineteenth century. Although most of the Europeans were able to associate with the landscape, like Banks and Cook, majority still viewed the Australian forests, deserts and its landscape as the 'other'. As Clark states:

49 Judith Wright (compiled), New Land, New Languages (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.47
What is the dominant note of Australian scenery? The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret and stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle, in their black gorges, a story of sullen despair. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade... In the Australian forests no leaves fall. The savage winds shout among the rock clefts. From the melancholy gums strips of white bark hang and rustle. The very animal life of these frowning hills is either grotesque or ghostly... All is fear inspiring and gloomy. No bright fancies are linked with the memories of the mountains... Australia has rightly been named the Land of the Dawning...her history looms vague and gigantic... There is a poem in every form of tree or flower, but the poetry which lives in the trees and flowers of Australia differs from those of other countries...."50

However, this generalised view of Marcus Clarke, about the peculiarities of the Australian landscape, cannot be applied throughout the continent. As stated before, Australia was discovered in parts. Thus Dampier interpreted the land as a weird one, while for Cook it was the opposite. Similarly, the different reactions and interpretations by the Europeans bring to light the parallel images of landscape that subsist, in Australia. As Thomas Sidney Groser states:

There is scarcely a more lovely picture imaginable than a West Australian Bush in the springtime. Pink is perhaps the prevailing colour—certainly where the 'everlasting' predominates. But flowers of every other colour of the rainbow are there—white daisies; pale blue leschenaultia;

red, blue and cream orchids; scarlet and yellow kangaroo paws growing to three feet in height on slender stems; purple and mauve heather; golden buttercups and wattle—to mention but a few. The rich green undergrowth of springtime and the evergreen and flowering eucalyptus trees, form a rich setting for this glowing pageantry of colour. The indigenous trees of Australia never, perceptibly, lose their foliage.51

As reflected in:

The air is full of mellow sounds;
The wet hills-heads are bright;
And, down the fall of fragrant grounds,
The deep ways flame with light...

But, on the lap of lands unseen,
Within a secret zone,
There shine diviner gold and green
Than man has ever known...

Yea, in my dream of fall and brook
By far sweet forests furled,
I see that light for which I look
In vain through all the world.

[Henry Kendall “Orara”52]

51 Ibid.
RE-ASSESSING THE LANDSCAPE

With the discovery of gold in 1851 and the influx of colonial tourist in 1860s and 1870s, Australian landscape was interpreted from a new dimension. Gold put an end to convict transportation to the eastern colonies of Australia. The discovery made Australia a desirable destination and with a fair portion of the population of Britain clamouring to come to Australia, had a strong impact on the interpretation of the Australian landscape among the Europeans internationally. It changed the image of Australia tremendously. As William Howitt stated:

> God has done his part. He has planted her amid the Southern seas in genial latitudes, and in a position calculated to develop all her resources through unlimited commerce. He has given rich lands for the plough and the pasture, mountains and prairies for the flocks and herds; forests and minerals for her acts; a bosom ample enough and rich enough to nourish myriads of inhabitants; and it depends alone on man whether her progress shall be slow or rapid.\(^{53}\)

With the gold rush and the Land Acts of 1860s, the government took concrete measures to consolidate permanent European occupation of rural Australia. Railway was introduced in Australia that symbolised 'man's triumph over nature through technology'. There was a new vigour among the Australians to 'make the civilising process permanent'.

\(^{53}\) Kaye Harman, n.16,p.30.
I love the ancient boundary-fence,
That mouldering chock-and-log
When I go ride the boundary
I let the old horse jog
And take his pleasure in and out
Where the sandal woods grows dense
And tender pines claps hands across
The log that tops the fence
'Tis pleasant on the boundary-fence,
These sultry summer days
A mile away, outside the scrub
The plain is all ablaze,
The sheep are panting on the camps,
The heat is so intense
But here the shade is cool and sweet
Along the boundary-fence...

(Barcroft Henry Boake "On The Boundary"\textsuperscript{54})

The colonial tourist, who visited Australia in pursuit of 'wonder', added a new dimension to the interpretation of the landscape. This was different from the popular view. To them, the 'mountain forest' gave a feeling of 'tropical magnificence'. It also opened the doors of tourism, which led to monetary gain. According to Bernard Smith, "The European experience of Australia, especially in attempts to articulate distinctiveness of its scenery, botany and local cultures, transformed European conception of the world, including aesthetic values and the natural sciences.\textsuperscript{55} As Patterson reflects:

\begin{quote}
The Mountains
A land of sombre, silent hills, where mountain cattle go
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{54} <http://www.poemhunter.com/p/m/poem.asp?poet=38923&poem=483117>

By twisted tracks, on sideling steep, where giant gum trees grow
And the wind replies, in the river oaks, to the song of the stream below...
The Plains
A land, as far as the eye can see, where the waving grasses grow
Or the plains are blackened and burnt and bare, where the false mirage go
Like shifting symbols of hope deferred—land where you never know...
Where Nature pampers or Nature slays, in her ruthless, red, romance...

(A. B. Patterson “Australian Scenery”\textsuperscript{56})

The interpretation of the landscape by the tourist evoked a poignant image of the landscape. With economic prosperity and exploration into the interiors, landscape was evaluated from a new dimension. The Europeans were able to interpret and associate with the mysterious, unpredictable beauty of the landscape. As William Howitt states:

To us this is a strange land, to the next generation it will be native land. Born, therefore to love it, they will push its growth to greatness. The sons and daughters of the soil will grow up amid all the endearing associations of a mother country. To them the inverted seasons will possess no inversion. To them the gum tree and the wattle will assume the place of the oak and the elm. The warbling and the laughing jackass will be their blackbird and hereditary rook. To them the smooth

\textsuperscript{56} A. B. Paterson, \textit{Brumby’s Run and Other Verses} (Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1986), p.290
outlines of the Australian landscape will appear as charming as to us the most abrupt and picturesque scenery of the northern hemisphere. New interest, new history and new hopes will surround them with the genuine charms of existence....

It was no longer barren, dry or mysterious. The Europeans were able to link themselves with the landscape that not only benefited them economically, but also gave them an identity, which enabled them to improve their status in the English society. Landscape was no longer intimidating; it was filled with warmth, and love for the new landscape. The new interpretation of the landscape captured both the images of twilight and dawn, which reflect the social changes in the society.

The Morning Star paled slowly,...
And down the shadowy reaches the tide came swirling free
The lustrous purple blackness of the soft Australian night
Waned in the grey awakening that heralded the light;
Still in the dying darkness, still in the forest dim...

Till the sun came up from ocean, red with the cold sea mist,
And smote on the limestone ridges, and the shining tree-tops kissed;
Then the fiery Scorpion vanished, the magpie's note was heard,
And the wind in the she-oak wavered, and the honey-suckles stirred;

The kingfisher came darting out of his crannied nest,
And the bulrushes and reed-beds put off their sallow grey
And burnt with cloudy crimson at the dawning of the day.

57 Kaye Harman, n.16, p.30
And send her music through the land
With loftier tone!

(James Lister Cuthbertson "The Australian Sunrise"58)

However, by the 1890s, two years after Australia's centennial celebration, there was drastic change in the landscape. The impact of intensive agricultural and pastoral farming, changed the landscape. Australia was caught between depression and drought. As a result of heavy gazing and repeated cropping, the land turned infertile. This "sudden change of land use from subsistence to gain, the introduction of new species and practices determined by an international flow of credit, supplies and market, brought drastic environmental simplification, imbalance and exhaustion."59 The economic and natural calamity led to new new interpretation of the Australian landscape. The image of colonial progress was once again trampled. The landscape once again was interpreted in a negative light. It was 'harsh and elemental'. The image of the bush was popularised.

I am back from up the country—very sorry that I went—...
'Sunny plains!' Great Scott!
Those burning wastes of barren soil and sand
With their everlasting fences stretching out across the land!
Desolation where the crow is! Desert where the eagle flies,
Paddocks where the puny bullock starts and stares with reddened eyes...

Miles and miles of thirsty gutters-string of muddy water holes
In places of 'shining rivers'-walled by cliffs and forests boles'...

58 George Mackaness (ed.), An Anthology of Australian Verse (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1952), p.47
59 Stuart Macintyre, n.10, p.129
Fiercer than the plagues of Egypt-swarm about your blighted eyes!
Bush! Where there is no horizon where the buried bushman sees
Nothing-nothing, but the saneness of the ragged, stunted trees!

Treacherous tracks that trap the stranger, endless roads that gleam and glare,
Dark and evil-looking gullies, hiding secrets here and there...
Land of the day and night—no morning freshness, and no afternoon....

In the rain-swept wilderness that are wildest of the wild...

(Henry Lawson "Up the Country")

The above interpretation of the landscape was popularised by "men who clung to the city despite their dissatisfaction with its philistine." Their interpretation of bush was a creation of an imagined rural interior that, "allowed city readers to partake vicariously in the dream of an untrammelled masculine solidarity...." It projected the landscape with "a dark side that defies ordinary logic and eventually drives human victims mad." As R. H. Horne stated, "...to defend these colonies—not so much from the sword, as from the pen; and not from harsh truths, but injurious fallacies."

However, this negative interpretation of the landscape ignited the spirit of nationalism among the Europeans. The

60 John Leonard, n.20, p.310
61 Stuart Macintyre, n.10, p.132
62 Ibid., p.131
63 Kaye Harman, n.16, p.42
landscape was re-interpreted, with lots of ‘conscious’ local idioms. In the search “for what was distinctively Australian they turned inwards, away from the city with its derivation forms to an idealised countryside. This countryside was no longer a tranquil Arcadian retreat.”64 The new interpretation of the landscape replaced the pastoral landscapes with the ‘bush’ landscape.

And the roads were hot and dusty, and the plains were burnt and brown...
Where the sun-baked earth was gasping like a creature in its pain
You would find the grasses waving like a field of summer grain,
And the miles of thirsty gutters blocked with sand and choked with mud,
You would find them mighty rivers with a turbid, sweeping flood...
But the bush hath moods and changes, as the season rise and fall,
And the men who know the bush land—they are loyal through it all...
But you found the bush was dismal and a land of no delight...
Did you hear no sweeter in the music of the bush

(A. B. Patterson “In Defence of the Bush”65)

It also boosted the political cause of establishing Australia as a Federation. It was no coincidence that in the 1890s for the first time the majority of Australians, the children of the gold rush

64 Stuart Macintyre, n.10, p.130
65 A. B. Patterson, The Collected Verse Of A. B. Patterson (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1950)
immigrants, were Australian-born. There was a rise in the ‘incipient sense of place and love for the land.’

\[ I \text{ love a sunburnt country,} \\
A \text{ land of sweeping plains,} \\
\text{Of ragged mountains ranges,} \\
\text{Of droughts and flooding rains.} \\
I \text{ love her far horizons,} \\
I \text{ love her jewel-sea,} \\
\text{Her beauty and her terror—} \\
\text{The wide brown land for me!} \]

The stark white ring-barked forests,  
All tragic to the moon,  
The sapphire-misted mountains,  
The hot gold hush of noon.  
Green tangle of the brushes,  
Where lithe lianas coil,  
And orchids deck the tree tops  
And ferns the warm dark soil...

(Dorothea Mackellar “My Country”\(^6\)

Most Australians preferred life in Australia than in any contemporary European city. With material prosperity Australia became ‘heaven on earth’. With economic prosperity Australia was at par with the world. On January 1, 1901 Australia became a federation. With economic and political stability, Australia became officially autonomous in both internal and external affairs with the passing of the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act on October 9, 1942. The Australian Act in 1986 eliminated the last vestiges of British

\(^6\) <http://www.poemhunter.com/p/m/poem.asp?poet=32752&poem=388748>
legal authority at the Federal level. The native flora and fauna were used as symbols to represent Australia.

All that the world can know
Of the wild and the weried is here,
Where the black men come and go
With their boomerang and spear,
And the wild duck darken the evening sky
As they fly to their nests in the reed bleds high
When the tropic night is near...

(A. B. Patterson "Buffalo Country" 67)

The Federation ushered in a new identity, among the Australians. It brought about internal and external changes. Externally, it became closer to Europe and internally it introduced reforms, which aimed 'at reinvigorating the race and strengthening its capacity to contribute constructively to national goals.' However the depression (the most severe Australia had ever faced) exposed the new nation to economic vulnerability and dependence. Between 1895 and 1903, drought dried up the inland fertile crescent. This had a devastating impact on the land. The landscape turned:

Oh 'taws a poor country, in Autumn it was bare,
The only green was the cutting grass and the sheep found little there.
Oh, the thin wheat and the brown oats were never two foot high,
But down in the poor country no pauper was I...

...I waded out to the swan's nest, at noght I heard them sing,
I stood amazed at the Pelican, and crowned him for a king;

67 George Mackaness, (ed.) n.58, p.299
I saw the black duck in the reeds, and the spoonbill on the sky,
And in that poor country no pauper was I...

(John Shaw Neilson “The Poor, Poor Country”\textsuperscript{68})

Followed by the drought, World War I had a deep impact on the Australians and its landscape interpretation. Both Australian victories and losses in World War I battlefields contribute significantly to Australia’s national identity.\textsuperscript{69} Over 60,000 Australians died during the conflict and 155,000 were wounded. Unrest, domestic recession and increasing urbanisation, renewed the white Australia’s association with Europe.

Yellow in all the earth and the skies,
The world would seem
Faint as a widow mourning with soft eyes
And falling into dream.

Up the long hill I see the slow plough leave
Furrows of brown;
Dim is the day and beautiful: I grieve
To see the sun go down...

(John Shaw Neilson “May”\textsuperscript{70})

Australia’s dependence on primary exports such as wheat and wool was cruelly exposed by the Great Depression of the 1930s, which produced unemployment and destitution even


\textsuperscript{69} Australia still has an annual holiday to remember its dead in the war on ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) Day on April 25, every year, the date of the first landings at Gallipoli in 1915.

\textsuperscript{70} Judith Wright, n.68, p.42
greater than during the 1890s. Australia again sent its armed forces to fight alongside Britain in World War II. It was a period of successive change in Australia. In 1940-41, Australian forces played a prominent role in the fighting. It was also for the first time that Australia's mainland had ever been attacked by enemy forces, an event which caused a state of near-panic throughout the country.

Fire in the heavens, and fire along the hills,  
and fire made solid in the flinty stone,  
thick-masse'd of scatteer'd pebble, fire that fills  
the breathless hour that lives in fire alone.

This valley, long ago the patient bed  
of floods that carv'd its ancient amplitude,  
in stilness of the Egyptian crypt outspread,  
endures to drown in noon-day's tyrant mood...

(Christopher Brennan "Fire in the Heavens")

It 'internationalised' Australian "imagination and also brought 'several, clashing kinds of modernity to the fore in the arts'. The introduction of 'modernity' influenced the interpretation of the landscape among the Australians.

After the whey-faced anonymity  
Of river-gums and scribbly-gums and bush,  
After the rubbing and the hit of brush,  
You come to the South Country

As if the argument of trees were done,  
The doubts and quarelling, the plots and pains,  
All ended by these clear and gliding planes

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Like an abrupt solution.

There was a sense of disillusionment among the Australians. The changes in the landscape as well as its interpretation reflected the impact of the ‘depression, suburban uniformity and social unrest’ among the Australians. The confusion regarding the future and its failure to understand “why an earlier generation travelled half way round the world to fight a distant foe...”, adds to the uneasiness among Australians.

And over the flat earth of empty farms
The monstrous continent of air floats back
Coloured with roting sunlight and the black,
Bruised flesh of thunderstroms:

While even the dwindled hills are small and bare,
As if, rebellious, buried, pitiful,
Something below pushed up a knob of skull,
Feeling its way to air.

The two World Wars brought to light the sense of insecurity among the Australians. As such Australia launched a massive immigration program. More than two million people immigrated to Australia from Europe during the 20 years after the end of the wars. Australia actively sought these immigrants, with the government assisting many of them and they found work easily thanks to an expanding economy. This wave of immigration exposed the Australian society’s monocultural, inward-looking and conservative attitude. The link with the landscape was snapped once again.

A nation of trees, drab green and desolate grey
In the field uniform of modern wars,
Darkens her hills, those endless, outstretched paws
Of Sphinx demolished or stone lion worn away

They call her a young country, but they lie:
She is the last of lands, the emptiest,…
Without songs, architecture, history:
The emotions and superstitions of younger lands,
Her rivers of water drowned among inland sands,
The river of her immense stupidity…

(A.D. Hope "Australia")

The negative interpretation of the landscape reflects the complicated association of the Australians with the landscape. Australia was still emerging from the horrors of the World War II. However, this paved the way for re-establishing and re-interpreting the landscape, from a new angle.

The late 1950s and 1979 onwards witnessed an era in which economists could characterise Australia as a 'small, rich, industrial country'. It is often associated, at least in the mind of many Australians who were young adults at that time, with a flowering of Australian culture. The third quarter of the twentieth century was an era of growth unmatched since the second half of the nineteenth century.

Australians achieved greater rights; immigration restrictions and censorship laws were swept aside; theatre and opera companies were established across the country, and Australian art and culture began to mention explicitly Australian themes. It narrates the discovery of Australia from a different angle:

It is your land of smiles: the wattle
Scatters its pollen on the doubting heart;
The flowers are wide-awake; the air gives ease.
There you come home; The magpies call you Jack
And whistle like larrikins at you from the trees.

There too the angophora peaches on the hillsides
With the gestures of Moses; and the white cockatoo,
Preached on his limbs, screams with demoniac pain;
And who shall say on what errand the insolent emu
Walks between morning and night on the edge of the plain?
But northward in valleys of the fiery Goat
Where the sun like a centaur vertically shoots
His raging arrows with unerring aim,
Stand the ecstatic solitary pyres
Of unknown lovers, featureless with flame.

(James McAuley “Terra Australis”72)

Australia was once again re-linking itself with the landscape.
It interpreted landscape, which was influenced by the change in
the social, political, economic and cultural scenario. The
landscape was no longer interpreted as ‘bush’ or treated with
indifference. It renewed interest among the Australians in their
search for ‘Australianess’. As reflected in:

Once as I travelled through a quite evening,
I saw a pool, jet-black and mirror-still.
Beyond, the slender paperbacks stood crowding;
each on its own white image looked its fill,
and nothing moved but thirty egrets wading-

thirty egrets in a quite evening.

Once in a lifetime, lovely past believing,
your lucky eyes may light on such a pool.
As though for many years I had been waiting,

72 Elizabeth Webby, n.9, p.69
I watched in silence, till my heart was full
of clear dark water, and white trees unmoving,
and, whiter yet, those thirty egrets wading.

(Judith Wright "Egrets"73)

Australians were able to find meaning in the 'meaningless'
landscape. The subtlety of the landscape is not only accepted, but
is appreciated and preserved.

Beyond all arguments, there is the land itself,
drying out and cracking at the end of summer
like a vast badly-made ceramic, uneven and powdery,
loosing its topsoil and its insect-bodied grass seeds
to the wind's dusty perfumes, that sense of the land,
then soaking up soil- darkening rains and filling out
with the force of renewal at the savoured winter break.

Sheep and cattle are there with their hard split feet.
They loosen topsoils that will wash away or blow away,
punishing the land for being so old and delicate,
and they make walking tracks that run like scars
across the bitten-down paddocks stitched with fences
while the farmers in their cracked and dried-out boots
wait for one good seasons to make their money green
again.

(Philip Hodgins "The Land Itself")

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Thus the Australian landscape is intrinsically linked with Australians and Australia. It has become a part of their identity and existence. The European interpretations of landscape from appearing grotesque have now changed into a picturesque landscape. This led to the gradual acceptance of the landscape among the different classes of Europeans. Its interpretation, with all its variation, reflected the relations it shares with the landscape. Landscape is now ingrained in the Australian consciousness.